

JUNE 2020

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FEMINA

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GUJARAT SPECIAL

*Be
unstoppable*

Urja Mihir Patel

PATIENTLY
ENDURING HARDSHIPS,
NURTURING PASSION
TO TRIUMPH

Monica Vaswani

STANDING STRONG
THROUGH THE STORM,
ROOTED IN FAITH

Dhruiti Prayag

QUASHING PANIC
WITH ORDER, SELF-
DESTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS
WITH SELF-LOVE

SAILING THROUGH ADVERSITIES

Turning negative thoughts around with positive actions

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LEADING BY EXAMPLE

FICCI FLO Ahmedabad Chapter Chairperson, Taruna Patel, takes a pledge to save the environment by dispersing five crore seed balls across India before June 2021



As we stare into an uncertain future that's riddled with climate change, global warming, over-exploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation, and many more such problems, we know, all too well, that the time to take action is now. Entrepreneur and environmentalist Taruna Patel, who has been an avid nature lover since childhood, has been actively involved in bringing about a positive change to the environment in her personal capacity. She says, "As a child, I was brought up amidst nature and I find it to be very pleasing to the eyes. Wherever we travelled, my father always planted trees and we used to grow our own vegetables. When I moved to India, I knew I would finally be able to realise my dream of being able to plant more trees, just as I'd always wanted to. My husband is also passionate about organic farming, and together, we have been able to make whatever little difference that has been possible."

Depleting green cover is a concern the world over, and restoring it is one of the 17 initiatives of the United Nations. Taruna Patel says, "I started reading about seed balls and how they could be effective in reforestation. I started the initiative with manual production of seed balls,

but then conceptualised a seedball machine prototype and had it manufactured by my company, Elecon Group of Companies, last year. The machine had the production capacity of over 25,000 seed balls a day. My aim was to disperse one crore seed balls by June 5, 2020. Seed balls have a life span of four to five months and hence production could only be started in February. Despite the lockdown, we were able to reach the goal of making one crore seed balls, and the same will be dispersed during this monsoon over the next two months with the support of District Collector Anand, R.G. Gohil and Gujarat State Forest Department officials, Nityanand Srivastava, IFS, APCCF, Government of Gujarat and Milankumar Manibhai Rajyaguru, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Anand."

Celebrated on June 5 each year in more than 143 countries, World Environment Day promotes ways to improve the Earth's environment, such as conserving forests. Mainly, it is one of the vehicles through which the United Nations (UN) stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. This year, World Environment Day was hosted in Colombia in partnership with Germany,

with the theme being 'Biodiversity'. The same was also celebrated at FICCI FLO Ahmedabad Chapter with the aim to help save the environment. Chairperson Taruna Patel, jointly, with Elecon Group of Companies and FICCI FLO pan India, under the leadership of President Jahnabi Phookan, took the pledge to disperse five crore seed balls across India by June 2021.

FLO, established in 1983, as a division of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), which is the apex body of industry and commerce in India, is an all India organisation for women, headquartered in New Delhi, with 17 Chapters across the country and a membership

of 8,000 members. Taruna Patel, CEO of EMTICI Engineering Ltd. and Madhuban Resort and Spa, Divisions of Elecon Group of Companies has been recently appointed as the new Chairperson of FICCI FLO Ahmedabad Chapter for 2020-2021.

Speaking on this unique initiative, Taruna Patel said, "When the world is struggling to save the environment and trees have become the silent victims of modernisation, we celebrate World Environment Day to establish positive environmental changes all over the world and we must lead by example."

Taruna Patel had also organised a webinar to celebrate World Environment Day this

June 5. While FICCI FLO National President, Jahnabi Phookan was the Guest of Honour, following dignitaries were also invited:

1. Shri Ganpatbhai Vestabhai Vasava, Cabinet Minister, Government of Gujarat, Tribal Development, Forest, Women and Child Welfare (sent video bytes due to last minute urgency at work)
2. Shri Nityanand Srivastava, IFS, APCCF, Government of Gujarat.
3. Kamala Chhaiya, MD, Gujarat State Seeds Corporation Ltd., Gandhinagar. (sent voice recording due to last minute urgency at work)
4. Shri Dr Jagdish Prasad, IFS (Retd.),

Chief Executive Officer, Gujarat Medicinal Plant Board, Gandhinagar
5. Shri R.G. Gohil, IAS, District Collector, Anand
6. Shri Milankumar Manibhai Rajyaguru, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Anand

FLO's vision for 2020 is also to take sustainable national practices and create a sustainable livelihood for the economic empowerment of women. FICCI stands for assisting the growth and development of the country in a manner that brings stature and recognition globally, and we trust Taruna Patel to steer the organisation in the right direction with her skills, knowledge, and experience across industries.



EDITOR'S LETTER



As the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdown took centre stage in our lives, uncertainty, panic, chaos, anxiety, fear, and what not, gripped our hearts and minds. There probably couldn't be a better alternative to staying sane in these times than by avoiding dwelling on things beyond our control and instead, channeling our energy towards self-care and skill-building. And that's exactly what these strong women featured in our Big Story for this issue did! Read their stories and find the energy and grit you need to turn negativity into positivity.

In the *All About You* section, we tell you how to go about keeping your kids engaged

THERE PROBABLY COULDN'T BE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE TO STAYING SANE IN THESE TIMES THAN BY AVOIDING DWELLING ON THINGS BEYOND OUR CONTROL.

even as the lockdown continues, albeit in different forms. Working from home and working for home is still tough to manage for most women, so don't miss our story on striking the balance between the two.

In *Beauty*, we tell you how to keep your skin and hair healthy while you stay indoors. Also read the story on mental health for adults and teens!

In the food section, we have some health drinks that will keep you cool through the heat and also boost your immunity.

Stay home, stay safe and happy!


Ruchika Mehta



FLAIR MULTI-DESIGNER STUDIO IS ALL SET TO REDEFINE LUXURY FASHION

AS SHOPPING TRENDS SAW A SERIOUS SHIFT OWING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, LUXURY FASHION UNDOUBTEDLY TOOK A HIT. BUT WITH THE WORLD EMBRACING THE NEW NORMAL AND ACQUIRING SOME SEMBLANCE OF STRUCTURE AND ROUTINE, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW WELL THE INDUSTRY REVIVES.

Ahmedabad-based entrepreneurial sister duo, Tanya Singh Purohit and Alisha Singh Patel, founders of FLAIR - The Multi-Designer Studio, are quite hopeful that in the coming months, as the COVID-19 situation gets better and festival season approaches, people will certainly purchase new items to add to their wardrobe and wear at functions, even if they are small family gatherings.

With diverse educational backgrounds and a penchant for finer things in life, the sisters have conceptualised the store format to raise the bar of luxury in the city. The opulently designed store and carefully curated high-end designer pieces by prominent designers like Masaba Gupta, Nikhil Thampi, Pooja Shroff, Ayushi Bhasin, and more are sure to bring in a unique experience for the

purveyors of luxury!

We spoke to Tanya Singh Purohit about the current COVID-19 situation and the way ahead.

Q. What does the immediate future hold for luxury fashion?

A. COVID-19 has brought about a transformation in the way businesses will work in the future. There is a major transformation in people's buying behaviour and consumer preferences. We feel that in the coming


times, people will be more interested to invest in brands and labels that are evergreen. Classic designs will make a huge comeback. Impulsive shopping is sure to take a back seat for sometime, with people buying only what they need.

Q. How are you set for the festival season?

A. We are coming up with an amazing line up of new designers at the store this month, keeping in mind that Rakhi is approaching. The new line up of designers will have an eclectic mix of Indian, prêt and Indo-western wear. Considering that this year, due to the COVID-19 situation, Rakhi will mostly be a close-knit family affair for most of us, we understand that people will want to pick up pieces that are classy yet well-priced, and that has been our primary concern while selecting designers.

Q. What precautions are taken at your store to prevent the spread of coronavirus?

A. We are taking absolute precautions for all customers that visit our store.

Sanitisation before entering the store, temperature checks of staff and clients, shoe covers, steam ironing and disinfection of the clothes before and after trial, and sanitisation of the trial room before and after each trial, are some important steps we are taking to keep our customers safe. We are also providing online shopping facility through WhatsApp, Instagram, and video calls, and ensuring safe and sanitised delivery of all garments. 

FEMINA

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FEMINA PROMOTION

REVIVE YOUR LOVE FOR HANDICRAFTS

**SWAYAM BY CHATURA HUTHEESING IS YOUR ONE-STOP
SHOP FOR HANDCRAFTED GOODS, CUSTOMISED DÉCOR
PRODUCTS, AND MORE!**



Swayam—an ode to strong women, a love letter to heritage arts and crafts—is an initiative by Chatura Hutheesing, where women are provided an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and creative abilities, creating handicrafts that tell a story of warmth, strength, and commitment to their craft.

For Hutheesing, a qualified optometrist from SNDT University Mumbai, specialised in paediatric optometry from the UK, having an experience of over 30 years and

passion lies in creating handicraft products, which is why Swayam came into being. She says, “Swayam is a platform where women who are keen to learn and earn out of the vocation of handicrafts are empowered to do so. Swayam, as the name goes, indicates created by self. Our handcrafted products are made by highly skilled females with each piece being unique. The joy of perfection in each handcrafted product and the appreciation in the eyes of people excites me the most. My USP is mixing various craft forms and creating amazingly unique products out of it. Working with NGOs to get handcrafted products from them gives me great satisfaction.”

For Hutheesing, creativity is in her genes and she started to learn making handicrafts since a young age seeing her mother, Maya S Bhatt, teach her students. She adds, “The urge to take the excellence of handicraft products to a greater audience while helping myself, my mom, and many highly skilled women by providing a platform to showcase their skills led to the birth of Swayam Made of Joy.”

The brand specialises in intricately decorated baskets for trousseau packing. They also have delicately quilled envelopes and customised

crochet bags. They also customise tunics, kurtas, etc. with fabric painting. Materials like cotton, silk, jute are used to create reusable tablemats, dinner napkins, cocktail napkins, table runners, and matching napkin rings. They also reuse denim outfits to create fashionable bags, yoga mats, and iPad covers.

Simply name an art form and Swayam has the skills, talent, and resources to accommodate your request! They also take bulk orders for wedding gifts.

Get in touch today!



also serving as Director in her family software company, Cygnet Infotech, for the past twenty years didn't stop her from pursuing her interests in healing modalities like access bars, pranic healing, and past life regression.

That being said, Hutheesing's true

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FEMINA PROMOTION

GRAB YOUR SLICE OF HEAVEN!

WHETHER YOU'RE BORED OF THE SAME OLD CHEESECAKE FLAVOURS OR ARE A BAKED CHEESECAKE FAN BUT CAN'T INDULGE IN THIS DELECTABLE DESSERT DUE TO DIETARY RESTRICTIONS, SUSHIMOLAY IS THE PLACE FOR YOU



A dessert takeaway and delivery startup founded by Shimoli Mehta, Sushimolay, in less than a month, has earned a loyal fan following. Speaking of starting this venture, Mehta says, "I did my graduation in IT and Management from UCL, London, and worked with a multinational for two years. I also had my food blog where I used to write about the variety of foods I ate from all over the world. Later, I also started posting easy recipes on my

blog site. I came to India last year and since I knew I wanted to do something in the food industry, I started testing the waters, trying to understand what the food landscape was like in Gujarat, and customer preferences."

Mehta developed her signature eggless cheesecake recipe after laboriously experimenting in the kitchen. She says, "My eggless cheesecake is perfectly set and one can't tell it apart from a regular baked cheesecake!

I also use quality high-value ingredients in my recipes while being authentic and transparent with customers regarding the same."

Sushimolay was started during the third phase of the lockdown, and while it might seem to have been a bad idea, things worked absolutely fine for Mehta and she even received over a hundred orders in the first month itself! She says, "I want to develop vegetarian, eggless, and gelatin-free recipes of dishes

so that people with dietary restrictions can enjoy them. I put a lot of effort to develop the right recipe so that the original texture and flavour is not lost."

All fitness freaks reading this, there's something in store for you too! You'll be able to gorge on sinful cheesecake without the guilt. For the first time in Gujarat, Sushimolay brings to dessert connoisseurs sugar-free cheesecake!

Currently, Sushimolay delivers pan Gujarat and there are plans to expand to pan India. Mehta is keen on having a tight menu focussing only on a small range of products, and as such keeps innovating with ingredients. While classic flavours like Nutella are on the menu, so are blueberry lemongrass, mango basil and the like. For this month, she has introduced a range of gourmet mocktail cheesecakes such as Pinacolada, Dalgona Martini, and Cosmopolitan! All her new fangled flavours are intricately balanced with sweet and tangy notes.

Explaining COVID-19 safety measures, Mehta says, "Herbs like lemongrass, basil, and Moroccan mint are home-grown, reducing the risk of contracting COVID-19. Proper sanitisation and wearing safety equipment while baking also prevents the spread of the virus. Most importantly, it's a small business with few people on board, and the lack of contact with the product before delivery makes it safe."

An interesting addition that sets Mehta's cheesecakes apart from the rest is the small bottle of coulis that comes along. Simply drizzle over your slice and dig in!

Sounds delicious, doesn't it! Place your order at Sushimolay on Instagram or call/WhatsApp on 7698198555

WE HEAR YOU!

Write to us at femina@wmm.co.in

It's commendable what our COVID-19 warriors are doing for our country! Right from the police to doctors and healthcare workers, we need to stand by them as they work long hours in such a situation for us. It was great to read about them in your cover story in the last issue of *Femina*. Salute to these warriors and thank you for bringing us such wonderful stories!

Purva Gandhi, Vadodara

In these tough times, there's no doubt that frontline workers are making endless sacrifices to serve or help others in whatever way they can. Kudos to all these individuals! The women featured in the cover story of the last issue of *Femina* deserve all the praise and hopefully, people will give them all the respect they deserve.

Trisha Patel, Ahmedabad

The last COVID-19 warriors story was a fabulous read just as the one before it. I think you guys are



doing a fantastic job by bringing these wonderful and inspiring stories to us readers. Kudos to all of you!

Heli Jain, Rajkot

I'm thoroughly enjoying reading the digital issues of *Femina* as much as I loved flipping through the pages of the magazine earlier. The content is really

engaging. Moreover, I love reading about our selfless COVID-19 warriors and how they're putting everything at stake for us.

Jinal Pandya, Ahmedabad

The contribution and sacrifices of our COVID-19 warriors shouldn't go to waste. They deserve all the praise and respect, so thanks a ton for sharing such amazing stories about these heroes. Looking forward to more of such wonderful stories.

Mrinal Shah, Gandhinagar



I've recently started to try my hand at baking and I'm always on the lookout for easy cake recipes because I have a sweet tooth! Needless to say, I loved the recipes in the last issue of *Femina* and the cakes I tried out turned out to be lip-smacking!

Pihu Sheth, Surat

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THE BIG STORY

FROM HOPELESS TO HOPEFUL

Eat, pray, love—that's how these strong women found the strength to turn around their situation for the better during the COVID-19 lockdown. Read their stories, find what motivates or inspires you, and sail through adversities! By **Kalwyna Rathod**

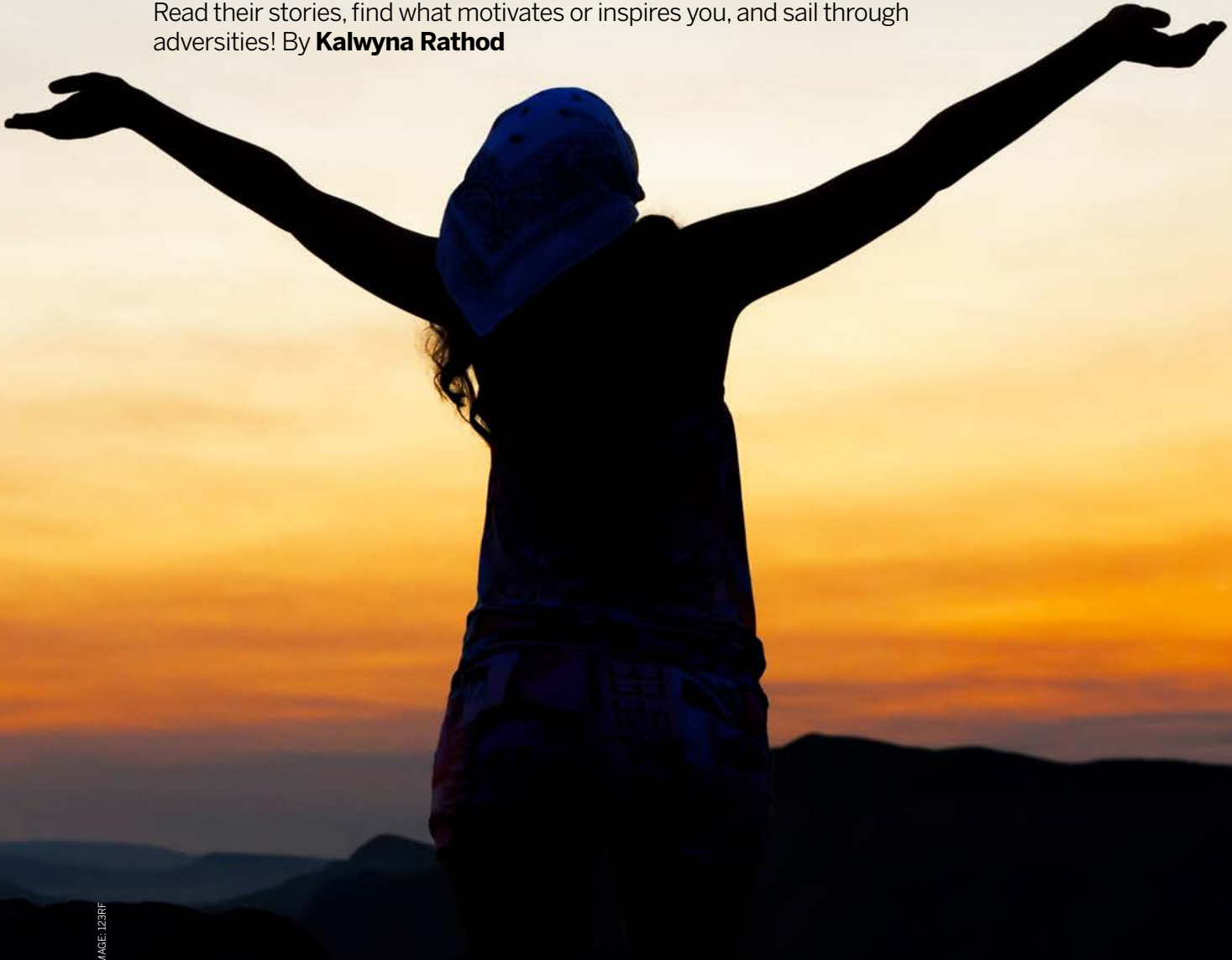


IMAGE: 123RF

URJA MIHIR PATEL

While fuelled by the passion to succeed, this restaurateur believes in being patient and waiting for bad days to pass



Armed with a degree in food biotechnology, married to a chef, owner of a café and a catering business, and possessing an inimitable passion to take her business to new heights—sounds like Urja Mihir Patel has the perfect mixed bag, doesn't it! But what happens when you add in a sprinkling of uncertainty stemming from the COVID-19 lockdown?

Patel says, "Most restaurateurs do not own real estate. And that's the case with us as well—we have a rented space in one of the poshest localities of Ahmedabad where rental rates are sky high! When the lockdown was announced, the first 15 days went by with my husband and I thinking this was a non-issue and all would be okay. After a month, however, we started to get worried about how we would be able to pay the rent. We didn't start this business just because we had savings to spare; our business is our passion, and most importantly, our bread and butter. So naturally, I started having my doubts about the future of our café."

What made her bounce back quickly was the love for and attachment she has with her café. Right from the logo and the interiors to the menu, everything has been meticulously worked on by Patel and her husband. She says, "Struggles are a part of life but one needs to be patient and wait for the bad days to pass. For me, my passion to make my business sustain and succeed trumps all. My husband has been my source of strength, too, as he continued to motivate and inspire me on days when I felt low. We also spent a lot of time experimenting in the kitchen, researching how to take our business forward, and learning new things via webinars."

One thing that the lockdown has taught Patel is to keep going and giving her best despite the odds. She says, "Post lockdown, my motto has been to maintain trust and consumer confidence in terms of safety. With reduced operation time, we haven't been able to break even, and we haven't partnered with food delivery platforms either. We rely on repeat customers and word-of-mouth marketing, and I'm going to focus on offering a variety of fresh breads, cakes and desserts, and continental food."

My husband has been my source of strength, too, as he continued to motivate and inspire me on days when I felt low.

MONICA VASWANI

Praying and chanting, supplemented with giving, has made all the difference

Hope is courage. And faith is the ultimate expression of hope,' one of the many quotes by Daisaku Ikeda that Ahmedabad-based apparel merchandiser, Monica Vaswani, lives by. For Vaswani, 'within' was the way ahead and being the ray of hope for herself the only option to get through the dark tunnel. She says, "I am a follower of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and I think that having been practising it for two years is the reason I feel this invincible spirit surging through me. Of course, I was concerned about the health of my parents and family, and business overheads were another huge concern. However, I looked at everything from the perspective of faith, and continuous chants and prayers for peace and harmony in the world didn't let my mind get swayed by fear and anxiety."

Speaking about remaining hopeful through the lockdown, Vaswani says, "Even the most powerful storms can't affect trees with profound roots. Ultimately, every battle is with one's own self. I had two options—either spend days scrolling social-media feeds and watching the news or creating value. I picked the latter! Along with chanting, an activity, rather discipline, that helped me remain composed was reading *The New Human Revolution*, guides by my eternal mentor, Dr Daisaku Ikeda, every day, which deepened my understanding of life and strengthened my faith, giving me hope."

Vaswani and her family also contributed to the lives of others positively during this situation. She says, "We, as a family, practice Soka Humanism, and applying humanistic philosophy in our lives, it wasn't the time to grieve, but to give. My father, a philanthropist, contributed not only to NGO's but made it a point to provide moral support to our team members through words of encouragement over call, in addition to paying salaries timely. In our business, we cater to clients who have been



I had two options—either spend days scrolling social-media feeds and watching the news or creating value. I picked the latter!

associated with our store for generations. We shared a video with them to help keep their hopes up. Our message reached over 30,000 people and this small yet significant gesture was well received by our patrons. My siblings and I also encouraged dialogue with our immediate friends who were having a tough time." >



PARENTING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Mothers tell us how they're keeping their kids creatively engaged and entertained

There's no denying that during this COVID-19 lockdown, parents have their hands full with balancing household chores and office work, while trying to keep their kids productive and occupied, and themselves sane.

Asha Vaghasia, a certified counsellor who is committed to breaking the monotony around conventional parenting practices, believes that parents should, first and foremost, focus on their own mental health. "It's not easy to be positive all the time, so don't stress. Try to be happy; happiness is contagious. Focus on hobbies you never had time to pursue due to commitments and busy schedules," she says.

Spousal relationships come next. Vaghasia suggests that couples should try making this lockdown a memorable one. Besides, how often do couples really get extended quality time to express gratitude for their partner, and the things they do for the family. She says, "Share household responsibilities and get through this period as a team. If there are unresolved issues, take time out to discuss them and put them behind. It is also important to give each other space during this time."

When it comes to parenting your children, Vaghasia is of the opinion that parents should strive to achieve a balance between personal aspirations and the needs of their growing children. She advises, "Stick to a normal routine as much as possible. Discuss facts but in a calm, composed manner. Set a screen time for your kids. In everything, make them understand your point of view by first seeing things from their perspective and age. Use this time to observe the little things that you otherwise miss seeing. Remember, happiness is key to a healthy mind, especially during a stressful situation, so spread smiles as much as you can!"

Read on to know how these moms are getting by during the lockdown. >



DHRUTI PRAYAG

Staying connected with loved ones and focusing on self-growth got her through the lockdown

Where there is love, there is everything—from days spent worrying about those dear to our hearts to happy evenings whiled away together despite the geographical distance, to making the most of me-time!

For Dhruti Prayag, who works as a Shopper Marketing Manager at an FMCG in Mumbai, the lockdown brought with it panic and a host of worries, not just for herself but also for her parents and grandparents back home in Ahmedabad. She says, "When the lockdown was announced, my first thoughts were, 'How will we manage essentials?', 'How will I work?', 'How will I manage not stepping out for 21 days?', 'I will have to cook all meals!', 'How are my parents going to manage all this?,'

This crisis has made me rethink my priorities in life, and brought family and friends closer.

'Grandparents should not be going out for evening walks!', and the like."

While the initial 21 days went off pretty decent, as the lockdown kept getting extended, the uncertainty made the situation worse for Prayag. She says, "The number of COVID-19 positive cases kept increasing, and staying indoors for three months, away from family, was creating a lot of stress. I even lost a lot of weight due to it."

Fortunately, Prayag's managers at work had been encouraging her to go home all along. Many of her colleagues had even braved taking flights, and the moment a friend said he was thinking of driving down to Ahmedabad, she packed her bags and came home. Looking back, she says, "This crisis has made me rethink my priorities in life. It has brought family and friends closer, and really made me value the work that goes into running a house and hence, I appreciate my mom even more!"

So how did she manage to get through the tough times? Prayag says, "Thankfully, my flatmate and I are both cheerful, non-confrontational, and adjusting people. During the lockdown, we tried to bring structure to life by dividing the house into work zones and non-work zones. We also planned meals for the whole week and put the list up on the fridge. I looked forward to weekends which would be made special with virtual game and movie nights with friends and family. One weekend we also had an art workshop where we made minimalist movie posters to put up on the walls of our house."

Prayag also kept herself busy knowing that she tends to get bored easily, which allows overthinking and results in a downward spiral of dark thoughts. "Apart from working out religiously and cooking fancy dishes, I read a lot. Once online delivery started, I ordered an ukulele and I am currently learning to play it."

PHOTOGRAPHS: DESIGN SHOOTS BY KAVAN SOLANKI; STYLIST: SEZMIN SALIM; LOCATION COURTESY: THEOKAPHE RESTAURANT AND BAKERY, BODAKDEV

PURVA PATEL,
Wedding Planner

“My son Prayan is eight. Being a working mom, I have never spent so much time with him unless on a holiday, so I’m enjoying that most right now. We are indulging in a lot of varied activities—we play badminton in the evening, which is fun and ensures we get some physical activity. We also play card games and board games with the whole family. Naturally, he loves taking up the iPad and watching videos on YouTube, but I encourage him to watch movies that have a moral at the end. And while we do have time for recreational activities, I ensure he takes time for his school work. He enjoys revising spellings, practising creative writing, and learning things on virtual platforms. We have a fully-equipped gym at home so we do exercise together as a family when not playing an outdoor sport. Prayan loves doing push-ups and Zumba.”



REBECCA SUDAN GONSALVES,
Image Enhancer, Behavioural Coach and Educator

“My husband and my six-year-old, Mark, indulge in board games, exercise, experiments, art, household chores, movie nights, and journaling. My son has created a Gratitude WordSearch with a little help from me in structuring it. We love to cook and bake together. Since my mother’s birthday was during the lockdown, we couldn’t celebrate like we would normally, instead we baked a cake for her. Mark, along with his grandma, decorated the heart shaped pound cake with chocolate spread and sprinkles. This was followed by a recorded interview session, where Mark almost grilled his grandma with questions about her birthday celebrations in the past. We also videoed in the rest of the family. As an added bonus, Mark played ‘Happy Birthday’. We then had a sumptuous home-cooked meal. It was an emotional day; we missed our get-together, but made up for it knowing that in our own little way, we were helping flatten the curve.”



“I encourage them to do things their way and compliment them on the effort.”



HIRAL TRIVEDI,
Lawyer

“My sons Neevan and Neevish are six and three, respectively. It’s a mixed bag when you have two kids in the house—the good part is that there’s not much effort needed in engaging them and channelling their energies. The tough part is that they’re a handful together, and handling them is a task especially since I have to if it means remaining patient and calm; I’m still learning this from my husband. At playtime, my husband indulges in ‘rough and tumble’ play with the boys; I’m more about expanding their imagination and creative thinking with activities like reading and enacting stories, or introducing new twists into classic tales. I assert they help with a few chores, to make them independent. I’ve consciously exposed them to the art of cooking since besides being a life skill, it helps appreciate the labour, fosters creativity, develops concentration, and hones gross motor skills. I always encourage them to do things their way, complimenting them and offering constructive criticism, if required.”



MAHIMA NAIR,
Lecturer-turned-homemaker

“I have two daughters—Tveesha is nine, and Advika is six. Fortunately, both of them have been patient with the zero outings in this period. They willingly help me with household chores. The elder one is a bookworm while the younger one loves playing games. Both my daughters have started their virtual classes, so after completing school work, we watch movies and follow up with a post-movie discussion, apart from other activities. My husband and I use Ludo as a tool to build virtues in our children. For example, being patient and alert at all times, playing fair and not cheating, and not being overconfident. We are all creative in our own way. Recently, my daughters made birdhouses. Also, due to a shortage of craft and stationery items, we started recycling items like plastic bottles, tin cans, etc to make candle stands and planters. We are also creating a night scene on canvas that has been lying in wait for three years.”

ACING OFFICE AND HOME!

Find out how these women are managing working from home and working for home during lockdown

With everyone bearing the brunt from office tasks to household chores during this lockdown, it's hard to not marvel at the sheer physical, mental, and emotional strength that women display. And more often than not, it's a lot harder than it seems to keep it all together. We asked a few women on how they manage to keep a balance. Here are the responses.



For Vadodara-based content creator Jasmine Chokshi, working in a content-led market means double the amount of office work while doing all the household chores too. She also takes out time to feed strays in her locality every day. "Fortunately, my husband takes care of cleaning and laundry; I don't even look at those. I cook all the meals and do the dishes. On the work front, the load has increased. Due to the lockdown, paid campaigns are on hold for the foreseeable future, but there are lots of meetings to strategise and chart a path ahead," she says.

Timelines are fluid for Chokshi as both work and home take up equal time. She remarks, "I don't get any time for myself except the leisurely cup of tea I have in the morning. That is something I haven't compromised on!" Planning well certainly helps Chokshi stay sane; she prepares in advance for the coming day and week. She says, "I have created an excel sheet with meals for the whole week. Over the weekends, I focus more on the housework and cooking prep for the week, like making chutneys, grinding batter, cleaning out the fridge and pantry, etc."

When asked what is the one thing that could help her, Chokshi says, "I wish more people come forward to help feed strays. All the other have stopped, so my load has increased. I spend an hour every evening in feeding dogs and cats; the meal prep takes another half an hour. If I could order dog food without thinking about expenses right now, it would be easier!"



Fluid timelines help: Jasmine Chokshi

On the other hand, the COVID-19 lockdown has given Hiral Matalia the time to pause, reflect, and ponder. A soft skills, technical, and behavioural trainer and life coach based in Vadodara, Matalia, who used to work eight hours on weekdays and four on Saturdays, is thankful for the spare time she has on hand. She says, "Life was a rat race and we were all running to beat our previous best. As an entrepreneur, I was driven by goals, ambition, and excellence, and so were my team members. Wanting more was considered normal and everything was taken for granted. At my firm, we took a 10-day sabbatical for self-reflection which rejuvenated us and gave us fresh perspective and learning orientation. We have started working half days between 1.30 pm and 4.30 pm and it's going great. Everyone is able to plan better, and we are more productive and proactive. Priorities have shifted to learning, upskilling, upgrading from wanting more business. Personally, I have time to focus on my growth—I've re-initiated my journey towards becoming a professional certified coach (PCC), which I have been procrastinating for over three years."

Matalia is also making the most of these days indulging in activities she didn't have time for, or thought were impossible, like exercising twice every day. "I do body weight exercises in the morning for 45 minutes and evenings are dedicated to 6-8 km of walking. A personal achievement is losing 6 kg in about 30 days, which has been possible not just through exercise, but also strict intermittent fasting with eating right. As for mental health, I'm reading a lot more, listening to spiritual discourses, and have started journaling to pen down my thoughts. We play more boardgames at home and I've been cooking new dishes each day. I've been re-connecting with friends and family over video calls. I've realised that every day is one day less from my store of days and that I need to make the most of it before something like COVID-19 hits me hard," she adds. >

**"I'VE REALISED THAT
EVERY DAY IS ONE DAY
LESS FROM MY STORE
OF DAYS AND I NEED TO MAKE
THE MOST OF IT."**



A break from the rat race: Hiral Matalia



Vadodara-based educationist Nikita Batra is a single mom who has been able to strengthen her bond with her 10-year-old daughter during these tough times. “My daughter has become more empathetic and self-confident during this period. She took up responsibility of so many tasks around the house and fulfilled them. She has become more compassionate, seeing me being a working woman and managing the house too,” she says.

Batra is presently working with Oxford University Press as a product consultant. She trains teachers in over 25 schools in states of western India, and as a STEM (science technology engineering mathematics) expert, and advises schools and develops curriculum to bring hands on learning into the classroom. Apart from training teachers in the morning and teaching physics to grade 11 and 12 students in the afternoon, being a single mother means having several responsibilities to shoulder. “Initially, it was taxing to manage it all, but I chalked out a schedule and that helped immensely. Amid all the chaos it’s important to have ‘me’ time, so I ensure to get 30 minutes of meditation and 30 minutes of workout every day to keep me sane and focused,” she says. **F**



Creates a schedule for multitasking: Nikita Batra

“AMID ALL THE CHAOS IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE ‘ME’ TIME, SO I MEDITATE AND WORK OUT, FOR 30 MINUTES EACH.”



LOCK IN HEALTH!

Here's how the lockdown can affect your skin and hair and what you can do to avoid damage

You won't be wrong to think that during this lockdown, your skin will de-tan from the lack of sun exposure, and will look healthier because it's not fighting off pollution and dust. However, there's more to skin and hair health, particularly when you stay indoors for extended periods of time. Ahmedabad-based dermatologist, Dr Meeta Desai, MD Skin, says, “Less sun and UV

light exposure leads to a deficiency of vitamin D, an anti-inflammatory vitamin important for immunity. Less vitamin D can cause pimples, acne flares, brittle nails, hair fall, dirty skin, irritation, sleep and mental disturbances, etc. Skin conditions like psoriasis can also exacerbate if you don't

get enough vitamin D.”

However, stress plays its role too! Dr Desai says, “Stress aggravates pimples, hair fall, and auto immune diseases, where usually, a relaxed mind helps. Surprisingly, 50 per cent of skin diseases are related to the nervous system. Because of stress, people might

see recurrences of skin diseases and an increase in disease flare ups. Apart from that, stress causes one to overeat, which combined with the lack of exercise in the current scenario, leads to weight gain, lifestyle diseases like hypertension, diabetes, premature ageing, and more.”

Getting Sufficient Vitamin D

Your bedroom or living room might get enough ambient sunlight each >

“LESS SUN EXPOSURE LEADS TO A DEFICIENCY OF VITAMIN D, AN ANTI-INFLAMMATORY VITAMIN IMPORTANT FOR IMMUNITY.”

day, but your body needs direct sunlight to function optimally. Dr Desai says, “Ambient or indirect sunlight will not suffice because due to the heat, people usually retire to air-conditioned rooms. To combat this, you can simply get into the habit of standing near a window or on the balcony every day for 10 to 15 minutes, to get direct sunlight.”

You can also include foods like mushrooms, egg yolks, cheese, fruit juices, dairy products, soy milk, etc that are fortified with vitamin D.

Skincare During Lockdown

While you’d think you’re better off indoors, Dr Desai says that the air inside our homes can sometimes be more polluted than that outside, especially since we’re not going out and breathing in fresh air. However, she does have advice on a skincare routine than can work, given the current scenario. She advises, “Most people have fallen out of routine. Those who aren’t applying any makeup now are definitely doing good for their skin. However, skipping skincare altogether is bad. Follow your cleansing and moisturising routine each day, and treat your skin to problem-specific creams like retinols, alpha hydroxy acids, and other night creams. If required, you can take oral vitamins and antioxidants to boost your skin and hair health.”

Fashion and beauty blogger Dhvani Bajaj is currently skipping



“THOSE WHO AREN’T APPLYING ANY MAKEUP NOW ARE DEFINITELY DOING GOOD FOR THEIR SKIN.”

sunscreen while she’s at home; she’s also giving moisturiser a miss as it makes her skin oily during the summer. Here’s her summer lockdown skincare routine:

- Honey for skin tightening and moisturising
- Sugar scrub for exfoliating
- Lemon for detoxification

Haircare During The Lockdown

Sweat and dead skin cells can build up during the day, so be sure to shampoo your hair at least twice a week. If you exercise daily, you might want to shampoo every day or every other day; use a mild shampoo to avoid drying out the scalp.

If need be, keep hair and scalp well moisturised and hydrated. Don’t skimp on conditioner, and be sure to treat your hair to a little extra from time to time, in the form of hair

packs and oil massages. Try to use natural ingredients like coconut and olive oil, aloe vera, etc instead of chemical-laden products.

Let hair dry naturally instead of applying heat or using styling products and tools; this will help prevent damage and split ends. Also remember to tie hair loosely while going to bed instead of leaving it loose.

Here are some extra tips to help you stay healthy during the lockdown. Dr Desai advises:

- Reduce stress by performing yoga, meditation, or listening to music
- Eat healthy and avoid bingeing on junk foods
- Drink more water, and stay hydrated throughout the day
- Stay active; watch YouTube videos to stay motivated
- Ensure you get restful sleep
- Avoid touching your face; this helps fight not just the coronavirus, but other conditions like acne as well **F**

PHOTOGRAPHS: 123RF

MIND OVER MATTER

Experts talk about the importance of mental health for adults and teenagers during lockdown



Whether you’re an extrovert or introvert, being forced to stay indoors for an extended, uncertain amount of time is bound to take its toll on your health. And we’re not talking about physical health here, because while it is important, mental health is just as crucial.

Ahmedabad-based senior consultant psychologist and relationship counsellor Dr Prashant Bhimani feels that when it comes to singles or people staying alone during the COVID-19 lockdown, only those who feel lonely are going to find it difficult to get by; those who enjoy solitude are going to be fine. He says, “In this current situation, chances of incidental or acute depression can be high. Very few people can live with themselves and most of them are relying on the TV and internet, which keeps them going. Sleep cycle disturbances are common, as are psychosomatic complaints like headache, a general feeling of dread related to coronavirus, and health concerns for oneself and loved ones. Individuals who are forced to stay put wherever they are, away from their home and family, are likely to have more of such problems.”

The home quarantine situation is also a time of great crisis for couples. Dr Bhimani says, “Call it forced honeymoon or forced coexistence, spouses will start noticing minute positives and negatives about each other. Things that weren’t apparent earlier, will be now; I’ve been dealing with few cases where wives have discovered their husband is having an extramarital affair!”

Take any typical Indian household and you’ll see that the woman of the house is most stressed and burdened with chores. Whether a working professional or a homemaker, women, while juggling between tasks, are also struggling to maintain their sanity as they stay confined indoors with family >

members who might not be willing to adjust. “Working all day without a holiday or break is a challenge and anyone can break down in this situation. Aggressive outbursts and sexual tension between partners is also common. That being said, couples with a good understanding are bound to come closer during this time by sharing responsibilities, contributing to economic stability, or providing moral support,” explains Dr Bhimani.

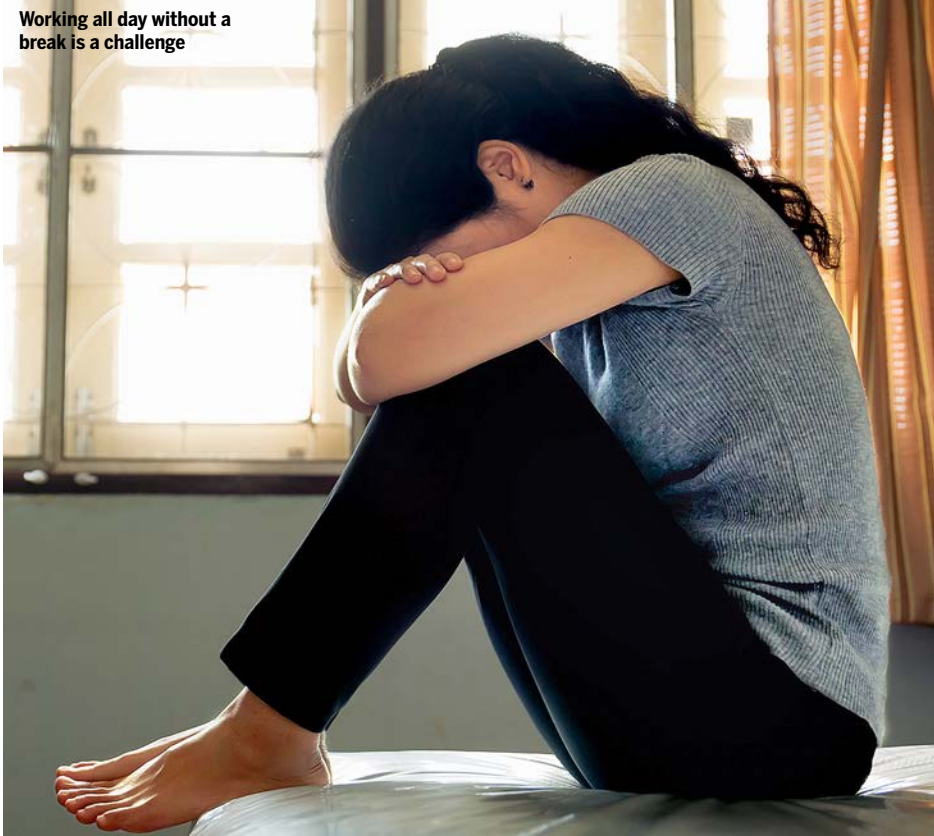
However, people must note that this is a temporary situation that will eventually change. “Several people are turning this into a positive situation by getting started on fitness or indulging in hobbies, which is great. For women, it is important that they realise they aren’t meant to fulfil everyone’s requirements all the time, and take care of their personal health and hygiene first. It is advisable to discuss matters with their partner or a family member so that problems can be dealt with together. If that’s not possible, speak to trusted friends or loved ones, or get in touch with an expert. Be patient with kids and avoid taking out frustrations on them,” Dr Bhimani advises.

Coming to kids, it isn’t just the young ones that need special attention right now; teenagers, even though it might seem their lives are revolving around their mobile phones and social media, do need some reassurance.

Ahmedabad-based Pooja Saran, a behaviour investigator, hypnotherapist and graphotherapist who also practises NLP and Reiki, shares three strategies for teenagers to create a new normalcy:

1. IT’S OKAY

It’s okay to be scared and feel anxious, but it’s not okay to hide or suppress feelings. It’s understandable that you won’t be able to share everything with your parents. Talk to a friend, teacher, mentor, or a therapist.



Working all day without a break is a challenge

“IT IS IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN TO REALISE THEY AREN’T MEANT TO FULFIL EVERYONE’S REQUIREMENTS ALL THE TIME, AND TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN HEALTH FIRST.”

2. FEEL YOUR FEELINGS

Missing out on events that you have been really looking forward to since ages can be incredibly disappointing. Like graduation ceremonies, last day of the school, birthdays, sports matches, a VIP show. If you are feeling sad about them, go ahead and feel sad; share the sadness in form of a sketch, art, painting, poem, dance, or song.

3. FOCUS ON YOURSELF

We might not know when and how right now, but we do know one thing for sure—we will come out of this situation. Now, imagine yourself coming out of it with a new talent, a new body, a new self!

This quarantine has something special which none other has ever witnessed, and that is the Internet. Although everything is under lockdown, everyone is still connected. So use this time to step out of the ordinary, learn the guitar that you always wanted to, take those Salsa classes, learn sketching, or write poems and get ready to get your book published. You can also read personality development books on Audible, Audiobooks, Udemy. Exercise, do those at-home workouts, learn yoga online, eat mindfully, and the new upgraded You will step out of the house once this is over! **F**

PHOTOGRAPHS: 123RF



A TOAST TO HEALTH!

There’s a drink for all seasons and all tastes, and these easy-to-make drinks with regular ingredients will not fail you, says **Shraddha Kamdar**

It doesn’t take much for an Indian woman to look into her mother or grandmother’s repertoire to find foods and drinks that can be made with easily available ingredients and are health-boosting and energy-inducing. Some of these are cooling, others soothing. So, time to move over dalgona coffee, try these Indian drinks that are great for health. Read on!



Golden milk

This is an age-old recipe that comes out of the grandmother’s list of recovery drinks. It is great for the immune system, and helps cure a sore throat. Just boil a cup of milk with a teaspoon of turmeric powder. Add a spoon of sugar (or better still, honey). Drink hot. If you like ghee, then add a teaspoon of it to the milk. It is cooling for the system, lubricates the joints, and eases bowel movement. If you like nuts, crush up some almonds and pistachios and add them.

Honey-ginger-lemon

This one is a no-brainer, and high on the popularity charts. You need to boil a teaspoon of crushed ginger >

in a cup of water. Strain, and add a teaspoon of honey and a teaspoon of lemon juice. Alter the proportions to the taste you like, but ensure you sip it piping hot! We are all aware of the digestive properties of ginger, apart from fighting cold. Lemon provides the vitamin C and honey is all kinds of good!

Kokum cooler

This is the perfect season to enjoy the benefits of this divine fruit. Used as a souring agent in everyday foods of Western India (primarily Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa) kokum is the go-to ingredient when one wants to cool the body during scorching summers. For this one, you can use a store-bought bottle of sherbet, or kokum extract or make it at home. To make kokum extract, soak two semi-dried kokums in a cup of water for an hour, blend and strain. Add sugar to the extract, and enough water to dilute the concentrate to the desired taste. Season with powdered rock salt and cumin powder.



“THERE ARE MANY VERSIONS, AND RAAB IS PRIMARILY USED TO BUILD STRENGTH AND IMMUNITY.”

Herbal tea

Well, it is more of a *kaadha* than tea, but works wonders to keep the digestive system on track.

Boil half a teaspoon of *hing* (asafoetida) in two cups of water. Add three to four pepper corns and a pinch of rock salt powder. Boil it

for a good 10 minutes, strain and add a squeeze of lemon. Enjoy hot. It will clear up any gastric issues you have. To enjoy it has a coolant, just chill the said drink and add sugar syrup as desired.

Raab

The Indian raab is nothing short of a superfood. There are many versions, and raab is primarily used to build strength and immunity in a person. Although it is known as a food for those unwell, it is one that will induce strength in anyone. This version can be made with whole wheat flour or *bajra* flour. Heat one tablespoon of ghee in a pan and roast one tablespoon of your choice of flour in it for five minutes. Slowly add two cups of water, stirring continuously.

Bring it to a boil and add 2 tablespoons of jaggery, a pinch of dried ginger powder (optional) and a pinch of carom seeds (ajwain). Stir continuously until the jaggery melts, and turn off the heat. Eat hot. **f**



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